

Narrator:

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Climate change is real, and now is the time to act, the head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA, told a U.N.-sponsored international conference in Copenhagen. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said our commerce and trade, our population growth and our social behavior are having profound effects on our environment.

Jackson spoke about global warming and its impact on the planet during the third day of the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen December 9th. Other members of the U.S. administration will also be speaking at the 192-nation conference, which runs through December 18th. . President Obama is scheduled to address the conference on its final day, according to the White House. "The president's decision to go is a sign of his continuing commitment and leadership to find a global solution to the global threat of climate change, and lay the foundation for a new, sustainable and prosperous clean energy future," the White House said.

At the heart of the international climate talks are specific pledges from advanced economies like the United States and Japan and emerging economies like China and India to cut greenhouse gases, which are widely regarded as a significant contributor to global warming.

Jackson said the Obama administration has worked from the day it took office in January to promote clean energy and prevent further damage to the environment. On December 7th, the EPA announced a finding that greenhouse gas emissions pose a danger to human health and the environment. The decision came after a 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision that required the EPA to determine if carbon dioxide and five other climate-altering gases threatened human health and to take measures to regulate them if they did. The decision was based on the 1970 Clean Air Act, which was designed to protect the nation's air from pollution.

Beginning in January 2010, the U.S. government will begin tracking approximately 85 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, a move that is seen as a first step in comprehensive action on emissions reductions, Jackson said.

Young participants in an international online diplomacy competition are using social networking to create and promote their projects, which help teach others about international issues and the value of diplomacy.

The competition is called Doors to Diplomacy. The 2009 winners were students from the Indonesian island of Sumatra and the U.S. state of Georgia. They used tools such as Twitter, videos, animation, comment forums and interactive games to help deliver their messages. The Sumatran students hope to motivate other students and community members to appreciate and preserve traditional arts and culture, while the Georgian students created a fictional character named Captain Water to teach about water conservation.

Now, for the eighth year in a row, the Doors to Diplomacy contest invites international and American students to promote positive online global relations. The deadline for entries is March 23rd, 2010. For the contest, teams of two to four students, ages 12 to 19, and up to two adult coaches create Web projects on international issues and propose diplomatic solutions. Winners will be announced in May

2010. Each student member of the two winning teams receives a \$2,000 scholarship, and their coaches' schools earn a \$500 cash award. Past international winners came from Bulgaria, India, Macedonia, Mexico, Taiwan and Uzbekistan.

Doors to Diplomacy judges look for informative content over interactivity and flashy design. The real emphasis of the contest is on the quality of learning and understanding of diplomacy and international cooperation. Many teams must overcome challenges to complete their projects. For international team members such as the 2008 winners from Bulgaria, infrastructure was a major obstacle: they had one computer between the four team members and no car. Despite that, the Bulgarian team still visited a nuclear power plant, conducted a community survey, and created their Web site to win first prize. An extra challenge for international entries is that the Web site has to be in English.

The students are required to help build an audience for their projects through publicity and community projects, and they also must evaluate four other teams' entries, a task that usually turns out to be a great learning experience.

For a winning presentation, students need to concentrate on original research, incorporate diplomacy in all aspects and create a comprehensive step-by-step project narrative, documenting how they built the Web site.

In addition to the top two prizes, this year Doors to Diplomacy gave special recognition to entries from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, India, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania, Singapore, Taiwan, Turkey and several U.S. states.

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